

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

MEETING HELD AT:

Cumberland High School
2600 Mendon Rd.
Cumberland, RI 02864

Thursday, January 7, 2010 4:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attending: R. Flanders, C. Callahan, A. Beretta, B. Shimberg, P. Guida, A. Cano Morales, A. Davis, K. Forbes

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Gist spoke to the group about Hope High School. She congratulated the faculty and staff, students, families, and community for having done a tremendous job improving the school environment and she said that they all deserve tremendous credit for their hard work. She then informed the Regents that the only thing that will be changing at Hope is the schedule and that the decision to change the schedule is a district-wide decision, made to ensure that there is instructional consistency and instructional training that will lead to district-wide improvements. She continued by telling the Board that contrary to what is being said, the school design is not changing. Advisories and common planning will continue. She reminded the Board that school reform must be done with the participation of the state, the community, the school, and the district and that all of the parties must be true partners in the discussions and decision-making to ensure sustained progress.

RIDE Staff Recruitment Efforts – The Commissioner told the Board that now that the reorganization of the Department and the Budget have been passed, budget savings will be realized that will enable the Department to meet its targets and fill key top positions. She reminded the Board that these positions are critical to meeting the goals of the new strategic plan for transforming Rhode Island education and are key components of the new RIDE Table of Organization that was approved by the Regents on December 3rd. Now, RIDE will fill six management positions to play key roles in meeting the Regents' priorities of: transforming persistently low-achieving schools; developing systems to improve educator quality; improving data access and use; and leading the RIDE team of attorneys. She reported that the Governor supports these positions as essential to fulfilling the mission of the Board of Regents to ensure that all students are ready for success in college, careers, and life, and that they are essential for a successful state application for federal Race to the Top funds, which could bring more than \$100 million to transform public education in Rhode Island. The Regents' proposed that the FY 2011 budget includes funding for these six positions.

Public Remarks

Donna Morelle, the Superintendent of the Cumberland School Department, welcomed the Commissioner and members of the Board of Regents. She also thanked the Commissioner for her work on behalf of education and for allowing her school committee an extension to sign the MOA for the Race to the Top application.

Dr. Jim Godlewski, ACT, spoke to the Board about ACT's work aligning the Common Core Standards and career and college readiness.

Steve Smith, of the Providence School System, addressed the Board on issues related to Hope High School.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Flanders reported to the members of the Board of Regents that the Race To The Top application is due January 19, and he recognized the Commissioner and her staff for all their hard work getting the application ready for submission. He also told the Board that the opening session of the General Assembly session has begun and that the Commissioner is working closely with the House and Senate on education-related legislation.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of December 3, 2009; December 3, 2009, Executive Session; and December 17, 2009, Work Session

Chairman Flanders presented the minutes of the December 3, 2009, meeting; the December 3, 2009, executive session; and the December 17, 2009, work session for approval.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Minutes of the December 3, 2009, Meeting, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Executive Minutes of the December 3, 2009, Meeting, as Amended. [Note: Regent Guida moved to go into Executive Session citing RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(1)and (2).]

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Minutes of the December 17, 2009, work session, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

APPROVAL ITEMS

Approval of Appeals/Town of West Warwick v. West Warwick School Committee
Chairman of the Board of Regents Appeals Committee, Amy Beretta, presented the Appeal from the Decision of the Commissioner of Education in the Matter of the Town of West Warwick versus the West Warwick School Committee. Ms. Beretta read the appeal in its entirety.

MOVED and SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of the Town of West Warwick v. the West Warwick School Committee, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Members to Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees
Commissioner Gist reiterated to the Regents that according to Rhode Island statute 16-26-3.1, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees shall be comprised of nine individuals, not less than five of whom shall be persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. Currently, there are three members on the Board – two whom are deaf and hard of hearing and one who is hearing. Six vacancies need to be filled, and the Regents were asked to approve five candidates. They are Iraida Williams, who works at the Paul Sherlock Center on Disabilities and is the parent of a deaf child; Jodi Merryman, who works at the Rhode Island Division of Developmental Disabilities and is hearing-impaired; Marie Lynch, an Assistant Professor of Special Education at Rhode Island College who has deaf parents; Amy Donnelly Roche, the Director of the Office of Student Services in the Newport Public Schools; and Dr. Harvey Corson, the former Director of the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford, Connecticut.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve Appointments of Members to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, as Presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Regulations
Commissioner Gist reminded the members of the Board that this item had been reviewed in detail at the December 17 work session. She reviewed the three avenues of approach for preschool education: standards for students (already adopted and promulgated to the field); standards for programs (being adopted today); and standards for educators (future work). She referred the group to the slide show document that was used at the work session and a copy of the summary of the revisions that was also discussed. The Regents talked about the proposed standards as compared with the national “gold standards.”

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Regulations, as attached.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously

Approval of Strategic Plan

The Commissioner set the context for the discussion of the strategic plan. She told the group that the December 17, 2009, Draft, which they had previously reviewed had been revised based on feedback received from Regents, RIDE staff, and the public via e-mail and Web site. She referred the Regents to the changes, which are highlighted in yellow in the document, and presented the following:

- The Targets for increasing achievement in 2010 and 2015 have been recalibrated to be more ambitious. Rather than a 2.5-percent increase, it is expected to be a 5% increase per year where proficiency levels are above 50% and a 10 percentage-point increase per year when below 50%. Commissioner Gist emphasized that these are highly ambitious and will depend on every district's accelerating performance as well as instituting robust interventions in a significant number of low-performing schools. Additionally it will require that instructional practices that attend to the gaps of achievement with English Language Learners and students with special needs are addressed in every district as required by the BEP.
- Also, the Strategic Plan ensures that the strategy and objectives will attend to all students. When particular project plans are built, based upon the data and the outcome measures, specific activities and action steps will address students who are English Language Learners as well as students who have significant gaps in literacy and mathematics.

The Commissioner then highlighted the most significant changes:

- Page 2 - "By 2012 75% of educators will be evaluated using a rigorous performance evaluation that includes student achievement data;"
 - Page 3 – "By 2012 100% of districts will have an approved rigorous performance-based evaluation system tied to measures of educator effectiveness and student achievement data that meets state standards"; and "By 2015 100% of districts will have generated two years of performance data for all educators and will be able to demonstrate data-driven decisions around hiring, assignment, advancement, evaluation, and termination."
 - Page 4 – "Analyze and report on districts' systems for awarding tenure based on performance-based evaluations" and "Ensure that districts and schools provide individualized and targeted professional development based on evaluation information and in support of student academic growth."
 - Page 6 – "By 2012 and 2015 adult education proficiency gains and outcomes will improve as demonstrated by the following percentages" [See page 6 chart]
- Regent Callahan commented that she "applauds" most of the work in the document, however she is concerned about the link between evaluation and certification.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Strategic Plan, as attached.

VOTE: Approved 7 – 1 [Regent Callahan voted against the motion.]

Endorsement of RTTT Application and Signature Authorization for the Chairman

The Commissioner reported that because of the rapid turnaround required for the filing of the Race to the Top application, the Department has had to work on completing and editing the application while asking for education groups to sign off on the document. She said that as of tonight, there are twenty-five districts that have signed and more coming in every day. The writing and editing work will continue all through the week. On Monday and Tuesday, the application will be available for public viewing from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. On Tuesday, the Department will hold sessions to gain feedback. Commissioner Gist then walked the group through the sections of the application. Regents suggested that the application include more reference to English Language Learners and funding equity.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Endorses the Race To The Top Application, as presented; and Authorizes the Chairman of the Board of Regents to Sign the Application.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion of Protocols for Interventions in Schools

Commissioner Gist told the members of the Board of Regents that the Department has been working on a document outlining intervention protocols for districts with persistently low-achieving schools. She said that the protocol will require that the schools engage family and community members in the work of reforming the schools. Community members will serve on “stakeholder groups” to advise the superintendent on turning around the schools, and districts must put in place ongoing mechanisms for meaningful and periodic family and community engagement. She identified six persistently low-achieving schools that will be the first schools to undertake intervention under the new protocol. They are Charlotte Woods Elementary School in Providence, Central Falls Senior High School, the Feinstein High School in Providence, Lillian Feinstein Elementary School at Sackett Street in Providence, the Roger Williams Middle School in Providence, and the William B. Cooley, Sr. Health & Science Technology High School, also in Providence. For each school identified, stakeholder groups, made up in part of parents, teachers, students, and representatives of social-service, health, child-welfare, and workforce-development agencies, will advise the superintendent on the selection of a school-reform model. The four potential school-reform models are: Turnaround – requires a new principal, screening of staff and rehiring of no more than 50%, a new governance structure, better use of instructional data, expanded learning time, and social-emotional and

community-oriented services and supports for students; Restart – the school reopens under a regional collaborative, a charter-school operator or management organization, an educational management organization, or a joint labor-management compact; school closure – the district closes the school and enrolls students in other schools that are higher achieving; Transformation – replace the principal, rigorous evaluations that include rewards for increasing student achievement and removal of those who do not improve their professional practice, instructional reform, increased learning time, ongoing community engagement, and operational flexibility regarding staffing and budgeting. The document will be moved forward to the Board of Regents for regulation approval and review. Group discussion concerned the issue of when to intervene – at the middle or high-school level.

Central Falls Facilities Update

- Commissioner Gist reminded the Regents that, on 9/3/09, they had approved district-wide emergency and high-priority renovations and additions for schools in Central Falls totaling \$20,499,999, as follows:
 - Immediate Emergency Repairs (\$500K)
 - Captain Hunt Early Learning Center (\$5.3M)
 - Margaret Robertson Elementary School (\$1.3M)
 - Veterans Memorial Elementary School (\$2.2M)
 - Ella Risk Elementary School (\$2.2M)
 - Calcutt Too Middle School (\$915K)
 - Calcutt Middle School (\$1.3M)
 - Central Falls High School (\$4.6M)
 - Alan Shawn Feinstein (\$2.0M)
- To date the city has substantially completed approximately \$1.2 million in emergency repairs at Captain Hunt and Calcutt Too.
- Enabling legislation passed by the General Assembly in June 2009 authorized the district to bond for up to \$5M.
- The City and School District applied for \$20.5M of Qualified School Construction Bond allocation. As part of the application process, they were allocated \$7,791,847 on 10/1/09.
- The City applied for \$2.5M of bonds through RIHEBC in November 2009. The state initially retracted the remainder of the QSCB allocation on 12/10/09 to be carried over for redistribution in the 2010 application cycle. However, as of 1/4/10 Central Falls is eligible to carry over \$2.5M of its 2009 allocation from the Qualified School Construction Bond program. Because the City has already applied for \$2.5M of bonds through RIHEBC, this carryover provision will allow Central Falls to bond up to the \$5M approved in the enabling legislation.
- Per discussion with the City, there is a cash-flow issue. The City is unwilling to bond for a total that is more than the amount that can be completed by June 30, 2010, and eligible for housing aid in FY 2011. If the City bonds for \$5M, it will have to pay back the debt service on \$5M immediately. If \$5M of projects are not completed by June 30, 2010, housing aid will not be for the full \$5M in FY 2011. The City cannot afford to cover the debt service without the 97% reimbursement. The Central Falls Building Committee is scheduled to discuss

- this issue at its next meeting (1/7/10) with the hopes of reconciling the City's concern.
- The City, in collaboration with the Central Falls Building Committee, accepted bids from design teams on 1/5/10 with the objective of selecting a team and immediately commencing design and procurement of the remaining emergency repairs approved by the Board of Regents.

As per RIGL 42-46-5 (a) (2), the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m. into Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 6:20 p.m.

Chairman Flanders reported that during Executive Session there were no votes taken.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the minutes of the Executive Session be sealed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Adjournment: With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.